

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

DIVISION OF STATEWIDE PLANNING

COPY

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June 8, 2000

Tom Hawkins
Sr. Vice President and CEO
Bristol Bay Native Corporation
800 Cordova Street, Suite 200
Anchorage, AK 99501-6299

Dear Mr. Hawkins:

Thank you for your April 25 letter concerning the Draft *Southwest Transportation Plan Airport Improvement Analysis Technical Memorandum*. I will try to address your concerns here.

First, we acknowledge the inadequacy of the analysis. Our own comments to the consultant were seven pages in length. Incomplete data was compounded by errors. We are in the process of revising the analysis in its entirety. We wanted to get the draft out the door in time for comments at the April 7 SWAMC meeting. In retrospect, we should have given it a more stringent internal review. Concerning your specific points:

● Regional differences - We agree there are several difficulties with applying the model as developed for the YK region. However, we believe the basic approach and objectives are valid. Our hope is to develop a methodology for determining when and where the airport master planning process should be applied, and to have an idea of what improvements are most critical to the region as a whole. We also feel that identifying and examining likely "fleet replacement" aircraft appropriate to regional air carrier operations is valuable both for us in anticipating facility needs and for the air carriers in planning future operations. YK aviation model developer Dr. Bob Whitford met with the consultant in mid-May and discussed the model and utility of its results. Differences between the regions in commercial activity, particularly fishing and tourism, and the "barge-shipment economies of scale" that you mentioned for the villages along the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers, have indeed been accounted for in the model developed by the consultant - only the data was in error. We believe the additional technical work performed to improve the data quality and better develop the results will prove extremely valuable to the region in the long run, and it will answer most of your concerns.

-Safety and economics - One of the benefits of sharing in the YK transportation plan aviation analysis is following up leads that were identified in that process. At Dr. Whitford's suggestion we looked into Lear jets as a possible medevac replacement aircraft. The Lear 31A can carry 6 to 8 passengers at 551 mph, requires 3490 feet for take-off and has a range of 1332 miles (enough to get from Anchorage to the end of the Alaska Peninsula and back). The implications are clear - we may be able to meet the expressed safety need through selection of aircraft and modest airport improvements, as opposed to large investments in runway real estate, which is expensive to build and maintain. The same is true for improvements desired on the basis of economic development. This is why we are sharing our findings with the air carriers, in economic terms they can relate to. The C-130 does not have to be the cargo aircraft standard for rural Alaska in 2020 as it is today.


We attribute many of the concerns we have heard expressed in your letter and others to inadequate data and incorrect data entry in the draft tech memo. We hope that you will find the revised airport improvement analysis, when completed, credible in its data, methodology, and findings. We anticipate completion of the revised report in July.

Should you have additional comments or questions please feel free to contact me via letter, email (eric_taylor@dot.state.ak.us), toll free phone 1-888-PLANDOT or toll-free fax 1-888-PLANFAX. We have added your letter and this response to our SW Transportation Plan Correspondence Reading Room on the internet at the following URL:

http://www.dot.state.ak.us/external/state_wide/planning/swcorr/swcorr.html.

Thanks again for your interest.

Sincerely,



Eric Taylor
Area Plans Coordinator

cc: Walt Wrede, Lake and Peninsula Borough
Terry Hoefflerle, Bristol Bay Native Association
Robert Clark, Bristol Bay Area Health Corporaion